



1929

Editorial

Kentucky Law Journal

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Recommended Citation

Kentucky Law Journal (1929) "Editorial," *Kentucky Law Journal*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 3 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/klj/vol17/iss3/5>

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KENTUCKY LAW JOURNAL

VOL. XVII

MARCH, 1929

No. 3

Published four times a year by the College of Law, University of Kentucky. Issued in November, January, March, and May.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, \$2.50 PER YEAR.....	65c Per Number
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EDITORIAL

THE ILLINOIS CRIME SURVEY

Practicing lawyers everywhere will be interested in the report of the committee selected by Illinois Association for Criminal Justice to make a survey of crime conditions in the state of Illinois. The printed volume of reports of this survey will be off the press about the first of April. What might be considered a preliminary report was made by Mr. Arthur V. Lashly, Director of the Survey, at the annual meeting of the Association of American Law Schools, held last December at Chicago.

The survey was conducted by a committee of sixteen members, ten of whom were lawyers. Its purpose was to ascertain and make known the factors responsible for crime conditions in the state of Illinois. The reports are under three main heads: The Machinery of Justice, Specific Types of Offenses, and Organized Crime in Chicago.

Twenty thousand cases of felony prosecutions in the lower courts were studied as well as felony cases in the Supreme Court. The working of the parole and pardon system was carefully examined, and a thorough study made of different types of offenses and offenders.

The committee reached the conclusion that failures of justice were due more often to defects in the administration of the laws than to weaknesses in the laws themselves; that there is no serious problem of crime in any community "where the police and sheriffs, the prosecutors and the courts, are all doing their duty honestly and to the best of their respective abilities. Problems of crime arise when one or more of these officials fails or refuses to do his or their duty. The need for better men and more honest, vigorous, and conscientious administration transcends the need for new legislation." In other words, the results of the investigation showed that we have the tools already at hand for dealing with crime conditions. We need the will to use them. The truth of this fact is being shown in Chicago at the present time. A most vigorous campaign is there being waged against law violators.

Similar crime surveys have been conducted in the past, notably in Cleveland and in Missouri. One is in progress at the present time in Boston under the direction of Dean Pound of the Harvard Law School.

These earlier surveys supplied the committee of the American Law Institute with necessary data for drawing up its model code of criminal procedure. Probably the greatest good that can come from these surveys is the fixing of the responsibility for the lack of better law enforcement.